

tion of them. As instruments, or guides to study and instruction, these questions are exceedingly valuable, and in some compendious form they ought to be published. The examination extended over six days, each day being divided into two sittings of three hours each. One hundred and twenty-four questions were set. The subjects embraced Physics, Chemistry, Crystallography, Mineralogy, Geology, Botany, Zoology; thus requiring an acquaintance with almost the entire range of natural science. The Examiners were, Dr. PAGET, Professor HENSLow, Professor MILLER, and Mr. LIVEING.

The working of this examination, like that of the similar one lately instituted in London, cannot fail to exercise the most beneficial influence in extending knowledge in various departments of science, upon which society is daily making more and more earnest demands for practical applications.

## Medical Annotations.

"Ne quid nimis."

### MEDICAL OBJECTION TO THE BANKRUPTCY BILL.

WHAT have surgeons to do with the Bankruptcy Bill? Let us hope, nothing, so far as the necessity extends for employing its commercial provisions, or coming under the influence of its pains and penalties. Nevertheless, medical privileges are strangely affected by one of the sections of the new Bill brought forward by Sir Richard Bethell; and if the medical interests of the subject are properly represented in the House of Commons that section cannot be allowed to become law. By Section 210 full power is vested in any single Justice of the Peace, lay or clerical, to determine the sanity of any debtor prisoner. This is monstrous indeed! Are Justices of the Peace endowed with sagacity so instinctive and knowledge so all-embracing as to be capable of determining a question which tries and sometimes even baffles all the acumen of a practised mind, and all the trained skill of practitioners whose years are spent in the studies best calculated to supply the power of solving the problem? Has *Dogberry* so grown in science, or is *Justice Shallow* a physician and psychologist? The decision of a single Justice has power by this clause to control the civil rights of any debtor prisoner—his power to receive, inherit, or expend property, and his right of personal freedom. We have seen Justices who did little credit to the Bench, whose dealings with debtors might make it convenient to pronounce against the sanity of any unfortunate, or who might choose to allow the plea of insanity in a friend or kinsman as a convenient and temporary means of avoiding criminal responsibility in culpable debtors. Considered from whatever face, this is an intolerable provision. It is adverse to the spirit in which all recent legislation has dealt with the insane. A magistrate, however accomplished, is entirely incompetent to decide upon his sole knowledge the question of sanity or insanity. This law proposes to dispense with medical testimony. We feel convinced that the country will not tolerate such a provision.

### APOPLEXY AND NARCOTISM.

THE recent charge of participation in the crime of causing death by poison, urged against Mr. Spain, has been very summarily disposed of. It has been shown, immediately on the institution of a serious investigation, that not only was he perfectly innocent of any offence and highly to be commended for conduct of great kindness and generosity, but that the crime with which he was charged had never been committed. Not only had he not poisoned his daughter-in-law, but she had not

taken poison nor died from poison. Her death occurred from apoplexy. Thus a very serious charge has been made against a perfectly innocent man; he has incurred, temporarily, the odium of a horrible suspicion, and has been subjected to the grave inconveniences of detention and public examination upon the groundless suspicion of being concerned in a crime which has never been perpetrated. The *primum mobile* was unquestionably the surgeon who was called to Mrs. Spain at the time of death, and this gentleman will rest his vindication upon the superficial resemblance between death from cerebral apoplexy and death from narcotic poisoning. He found the patient in a state of insensibility, her eyes closed, her countenance pallid, her pulse scarcely perceptible, the pupils contracted; and from these appearances "he had no doubt that she was labouring under the effects of some narcotic poison, and that her death had been produced by poison." The conclusion, however, by no means flows naturally from the facts stated. The above are all well-known symptoms of cerebral apoplexy, as well as of narcotic poisoning; and the absence of stertor is not a circumstance which need cause surprise or should properly be a source of error. The fact of the known difficulty of diagnosis between some cases of cerebral apoplexy and narcotic poisoning, if it suggests an excuse for error, commonly also ensures a degree of caution which renders error impossible. There is an obvious moral to be deduced from the misadventure of Mr. Nott. Charges so grave should not even be hinted in the absence of evidence; and only a post-mortem examination can afford evidence in such a case. Until the body is examined, opinions are mere guesses: how fallible and how dangerous, this case will strongly show. The greater or less probability of the guess has really very little to do with the question. The presence or absence of the scent of opium as a rational ground for guessing was much discussed; but it forms no justification for an affirmative or negative opinion, until the body has been duly examined. A person dying from other causes suddenly may smell of opium; and one poisoned by opium may be wholly free from its scent. Guesses should be entirely discarded where Medicine walks hand-in-hand with Law. Juridical science has only to discuss facts, and the importation of probabilities is fatal to its accuracy and destructive of its authority.

### A HINT TO ARMY SURGEONS.

THE assistant-surgeons of the army have spent rather a rough week lately. In the first place, it was announced that the Government intended to effect the reduction of the strength of the medical department of the home army, now peacefully employed on service which throws no great stress on the exertions of the medical officers. The contemplated change will include the reduction of one assistant-surgeon in each infantry regiment. This announcement spread alarm; for it brought visions of enforced half-pay, the dislocation of habits formed and arrangements completed, with a period of idle and encumbered poverty. The Director-General has, however, providently forestalled these panics, and has made arrangements with Lord Herbert which will preclude the necessity for placing any of the assistant-surgeons on half-pay. They will be gradually exchanged into other regiments as vacancies occur, and transferred to other home regiments. Perhaps even this arrangement will not be wholly without inconvenience; but it is free from substantial hardship, and the assistant-surgeons will be grateful to their chief for saving them from the more serious effects of the contemplated reduction.

Assistant-surgeons who have not yet passed their second examination are agitated by the reception of a circular letter, sternly reminding them of the trial which awaits them before they can be promoted to the rank of surgeon. Those who have gone through five years' service are plainly informed that if they defer the examination they may lose their chances of promotion, and that those who have not proved themselves

capable to serve as surgeons will be passed over when vacancies occur. This kind of reminder is wholesome, although unpalatable, and we exhort all assistant-surgeons of five years' standing forthwith to prepare for their day of trial, and face without delay the worst tortures that can be devised by Mr. Paget, Mr. Busk, and Dr. Parkes.

#### THE PRICE OF AN HOSPITAL GARDEN.

THE fate of St. Thomas's Hospital is not yet decided, but at least the Governors have won a great victory. The Charing-cross Railway Company had proposed to take a small portion of the hospital precincts for the purpose of their line, which would pass over a corner of the enclosed garden-ground close to the new north wing of the hospital, which was erected a few years since at a cost of £40,000. The hospital authorities, however, availed themselves of the 92nd section of the Building Act (1845) to compel the Company to take the whole hospital if they took the portion required, on the ground that this formed, in fact, part of the hospital. They claimed £750,000 as the amount of compensation for their interest in the hospital and its appurtenances. When the question came before the Committee of the Lords, they passed in effect the following resolutions in relation to the Bill:—

"1. That the proposed line was likely to be of great advantage to the public, and that no preferable line had been suggested. 2. That the proposed line would be productive of great injury to the hospital, especially to the north wing, which would be rendered totally unfit for patients. 3. That they would have been glad if some arrangement could have been made by the removal of the hospital to some other site free from the inconvenience of its present position near crowded streets and the termini of several important railways. 4. That as no such arrangement had been effected the Committee must leave the question of compensation to be dealt with under the provisions made by law."

The governors of St. Thomas's Hospital moved accordingly, before Vice Chancellor Sir W. P. Wood, for an injunction to compel the railway authorities to purchase the whole hospital at the rate of £750,000, if they took the proposed part of the garden-ground. The injunction was granted without hesitation. Without calling for a reply to the arguments of the defendant's counsel, the Vice-Chancellor decided that the garden, which was enclosed in one ambit with the hospital, was a part of it; that the new northern wing, included also in one boundary, was part of the ancient messuage, and would pass by a grant of it. It was attended by the same surgeons and physicians, and patients might be shifted from the centre of the building to this northern wing. He granted, therefore, an injunction in the terms prayed.

#### THE PHYSICIAN'S FINGER.

A VERY extraordinary case, and one sufficiently disquieting to physicians, was tried this week in the Court of Assizes at Paris. An Auvergnat named Mourges rents a house in the Rue des Beaux Arts, and occupies part of it in the business of a charcoal dealer, letting out the remainder in lodgings. Amongst his tenants were a poor couple named Brin, and he used to make them pay their rent every fortnight in advance. On the 1st of January he went to their room to claim the money for the fortnight about to commence. Brin was absent, and his wife was ill in bed. He insolently called on the poor woman to pay him the money; but her medical attendant, Dr. Guzmard, who had entered just before, pointed out to him the impropriety of tormenting a sick person, and recommended him to return when her husband should be at home. But he began abusing the doctor, and at length seized him by the collar. The doctor pushed him away with violence, and he fell. This enraged him, and jumping up he flew at the physician, caught one of his fingers between his teeth, and actually bit off the terminal portion at the first joint. In his defence

the man pretended that in a struggle with the doctor the finger accidentally got into his mouth, and that by a nervous movement which he could not control he had bitten it off. The jury accepted this strange explanation, and acquitted the man; but the Court condemned him to pay the doctor 3000 francs.

#### JUNIOR MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

A VERY numerous meeting of the members of the several Hospital Medical Societies in union was held in the great hall of King's College, Strand, on the 12th inst.

Dr. CONWAY EVANS, who presided, made a few remarks upon the advantages to be derived from the formation of a Students' Society, and gave a synopsis of the proceedings which had already been taken for the formation of the Society, referring particularly to the exertions of Mr. Ernest Hart, and Mr. Alexander Squire, of University College, in its behalf, with whom the idea originated.

The Hon. Secretary, Mr. HENRY WOODS, of St. George's Hospital, then read the resolutions drawn up by the Provisional Council for the consideration of the members of the Society.

The resolutions having been read were then severally put from the chair:—

1st. "That the Society be called the Junior Medical Society of London."—Carried unanimously.

2nd. "That the objects of the Society be—1. To obtain papers from its members explaining the opinions and practices in vogue at the various hospitals, and treating of all other subjects in the domains of medicine, surgery, and the allied sciences. 2. To examine and discuss pathological specimens exhibited by its members. 3. By affording facilities for the professional association of students from the various Schools, to increase their mutual acquaintance, and to encourage a feeling of sympathy and union in their general body."—Carried unanimously.

3rd. "That the Society shall consist of Ordinary and Honorary Members. That the Ordinary Members shall be such members of existing Hospital Medical Societies in union as are not actually in practice. That the Honorary Members shall be such members of existing Hospital Medical Societies in union as are actually in practice; and that those gentlemen who are on the staff of an Hospital or Medical College be *ex officio* Honorary Members.

Mr. BELINFANTE, of University College Hospital, said that he thought there was not sufficient liberality shown in this resolution, and that all students of Hospital Schools should be admitted to the Society without restriction; he therefore proposed as an amendment "That the Society shall consist of Ordinary and Honorary Members, and that Ordinary Members shall be students of any recognised Medical School of this metropolis."

Mr. BRETT, of the Westminster Hospital, seconded this amendment, and said that the only way to found the Junior Medical Society on a firm basis was by throwing open its portals to all students of Hospital Schools.

Several gentlemen having spoken in favour of and against this amendment, it was put to the vote, when it was lost by an overwhelming majority. The resolution was then put from the chair, and carried.

4th. "That only Ordinary Members be allowed to read papers or to exhibit specimens, but that Honorary Members have the privilege of taking part in the discussion."

Mr. BELINFANTE moved as an amendment "That this resolution be omitted," thinking that all members without restriction should be allowed to read papers.

Mr. BRETT, of Westminster Hospital, seconded this amendment, believing that it would be difficult to obtain papers from students, in the strict acceptation of the term; and that it would be more profitable to the Society if demonstrators and others immediately concerned in the instruction of students were allowed to read papers.

Dr. SANSOM, of King's College Hospital, supported the original resolution; giving it as his opinion that the Society should be essentially a Students' Society; and that if senior men were allowed to contribute papers it would deter many students from doing so.

Mr. KING, of the London Hospital, thought that house-surgeons should be considered as students, and allowed to read papers.